

have fertilised the female after courtship. Further observations are required for confirmation.

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20. STARRED TORTOISE *GEOCHELONE ELEGANS* (SCHOEPFF) IN CHINNAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, KERALA

Among the land tortoises, the starred tortoise *Geochelone elegans* (Schoepff) is reported to be common in semi-arid and desert tracts of south India (BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES, Daniel, J.C. 1983). It is further stated that precise information about the status of this tortoise in this range is lacking. Similarly, Das (COLOUR GUIDE TO THE TURTLES AND TORTOISES OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, 1991) mentioned its distribution in Kerala as "south east Kerala". Apart from this, there is no information available on the geographical distribution of this species in the state.

In a survey conducted in July 1988, this tortoise was recorded from Churilippatty area of Chinnar

Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala (10°15' to 10°22' N, 77°05' to 77°17' E). This is the first record of this species from this locality and one of the few specific records for Kerala. A single animal was sighted during the survey at an altitude of 500 m.

Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary is different from other wildlife sanctuaries of Kerala in its vegetation. This is the only protected area in Kerala with semi-arid and dry deciduous scrub forests, the preferred habitat of the starred tortoise.

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21. OCCURRENCE OF TWIN-SPOTTED WOLF SNAKE *LYCODON JARA* (SHAW) (DIPSADIDAE : LYCODONTINAE) IN RAJAJI NATIONAL PARK AND DOON VALLEY, UTTAR PRADESH

The twin-spotted wolf snake *Lycodon jara* was described by Shaw (1802) as *Coluber jara* from Ganjam (Orissa). Subsequent to this discovery, the snake was recorded from the neighbourhood of Darjeeling (Wall 1909a), Upper Assam (Wall 1909b), Bengal, Eastern Himalaya, Assam, Burma - Manipur, Pegu (Wall 1923). Gunther (1864) reported it from 'Annamallay' mountains. Wall (1923) in a footnote states "Specimens in the British Museum of Colonel Beddome's collections are labelled 'Malabar' and 'Anamallays'. These localities are to be discredited for reasons cited in the note below *Natrix parallelus*. Pegu on the authority of Stoliczka calls confirmation".

Smith (1943) gave the distributional range as

Ganjam in the northern part of the Madras Presidency; the Eastern Himalayas as far west as longitude 85° E; Bengal; Assam. Waltner (1975) mentioned its distribution in E. Himalayas (Sikkim and Darjeeling) as far west as longitude 85°; Bengal, Khasi Hills, Assam and Ganjam in the northern part of Madras state and the altitudinal record from plains to 6,000 feet (1829 m). After a gap of 34 years Talukdar and Dasgupta (1977) recorded a lone specimen of *Lycodon jara* from Katernia Ghat, district Bahraich (Uttar Pradesh) collected by Romulus Whitaker, being the first record from Uttar Pradesh and its terai region. Murthy (1984) broadly mentioned the distribution as Uttar Pradesh; Ganjam, Orissa; Eastern Himalayas, Assam.

While studying the snake collections present in

the Northern Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Dehra Dun, we came across two brilliantly coloured specimens of *Lycodon jara* collected from two different localities, Rajaji National Park and Doon Valley. The present communication records of occurrence of the dipsadid snake, *Lycodon jara* (Shaw), commonly known as the twin-spotted wolf snake, in the Siwalik Hills of the Rajaji National Park and Doon Valley, District Dehradun, Uttar Pradesh. Some salient observations on its colouration in life and ecology are also discussed. Interestingly the present finding adds a new distributional record, the foot hills of the western Himalaya.

Material examined: One example, female, 370 mm total length (tail length 80 mm). Loc. Asarori Forest nr. Police checkpost, Rajaji National Park, District Dehra Dun (U.P.); 20 August 1985; Collector P. Roy.

Lepidosis: Dorsals 17:17:15, ventrals 178, anals 1 (divided), subcaudals 71 (paired), supralabials 8, temporals 2 + 3.

One example, male, 190 mm total length (tail length 38 mm). Loc. Northern Regional Station, ZSI compound, 218 Kaulagarh road, Dehra Dun (U.P.); 11 November 1990; Collector P. Roy.

Lepidosis: Dorsals 17:17:15, ventrals 176, anals 1 (partially divided), subcaudals 66 (paired), supralabials 8, temporals 2 + 3.

Colouration: Well-marked and distinguished readily from other species. Olive-green above with golden yellow twin spots on each scale with an iridescent shine. On preservation, the general colour

becomes brownish or purplish-black and the spots whitish. The edge of upper jaw and lower surface of body are uniformly white. The specimens are devoid of the yellow/white collar. The eyes are black. The twin spots are club-shaped, pointing inward and backward, making an angle with each other. The overall arrangement of these spots on the dorsal surface of the body gives the impression of rosette pattern.

Habitat: The specimen from Rajaji National Park was collected from under a stone on the bed of a seasonal river. The river bed was covered with stones, gravel and leaf litter. The humus-rich leaf litter was rich in earthworms, insects and their larvae, micro-arthropods and the juveniles of a burrowing frog *Tomopterna breviceps*. The specimen from Doon Valley was collected from under a pile of stones adjoining a manure heap used for gardening.

Behaviour: It is nocturnal in habit but very active in its movements. When disturbed, it tries to escape by pushing its depressed head into the gravel or debris around boulders or stones. When disturbed repeatedly it tries to strike and sometimes makes its body stiff as if dead.

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